

GARDENING

. . . and in the Toolshed

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

IF you are buying a house and furnishing it you are unlikely to have much money left for equipping the garden with even the essential tools. They all have to be bought on a shoe string, and out of force of habit many people soldier on with old fashioned and perhaps cumbersome tools. But with advancing years it pays to review the toolshed and the advances that have been made in tool design and materials.

Unfortunately for tall people, the designers of tools are ever mindful of the fact that the average height of a British male is about 5ft. 9in., and they design accordingly. Any physiotherapist will tell you that if you have to bend over to use a hoe or rake, or push a mower, you are putting strain on the back muscles before even doing any work at all. If you have to put cross strain on the muscles by the action of hoeing, obviously you will tire more easily.

It is essential when choosing tools such as hoes and rakes to make certain that they can be used in a standing up position if at all possible. The length of handle is therefore very important, and with the Wolf range of tools one can have a choice of three lengths of handle. I have been trying one or two experiments myself, and I tentatively suggest that the top of the tool handle, with the head resting on the ground, should just about come up to the lobe of one's ear.

When choosing a mowing machine, whether hand propelled or power driven, make sure that the handles are adjustable for height. This has been overlooked by some manufacturers, though it is an important refinement.

A detailed investigation into the needs of disabled people is now being carried out, and it is certain that as a result many modifications to existing tools will be made.

It is also certain that modifications which make life easier for handicapped people will also make life easier for the able-bodied. The introduction of the Wilkinson two-handed pruner is an excellent example. Mr. H. B. Randolph, chairman of the Wilkinson Sword Company, is suffering from a touch of arthritis in his hands, and he found it difficult to prune his roses with an ordinary pair of secateurs. So he gave

his design team the challenge, which they have met magnificently in the new two-handed pruner. This consists of the ordinary blade assembly of the well-known pruner with 11-in. handles equipped with a well moulded plastic grip. Thus one can attack a rose bush or any other bush without the hands coming anywhere near the thorns, and of course great pressure can be exerted with little effort. I must emphasize that this is not only a tool for handicapped people—parks departments in this country and in America are already placing large orders for it.

In all gardens there is the constant problem of moving quantities of soil, grass mowings, leaves and other rubbish, and the one-wheeled wheelbarrow today is an anachronism. One is still half carrying the load. But with the two-wheeled truck equipped with pram handle loads are moved with much less effort. It is better still if the two-wheeled truck has a detachable body that can be lifted off to tip the contents on to the heap.

More and more liquids are being sold in aerosol cans. It is of course an expensive way of buying chemicals, but it is time and effort-saving, and in these do-it-yourself days economy of time and effort is important. Even more important is the convenience of an aerosol pack of, say, insecticide, because only too often one notices that there are aphids on the roses and quick action would prevent a serious build-up of the pest. It is not always convenient to mix up a messy spray and find the spraying machine, but an aphid born on Sunday can be a grandmother by Wednesday so a quick attack with an aerosol spray is a good answer.

As garden chemicals proliferate it was probably inevitable that some of the registered trade names of the various formulations should be rather similar and could cause confusion. An example, as one reader has pointed out, is "Weedol", the remarkable weedkiller based on paraquat, which acts only on the green matter in leaves and stems and is inactivated when it touches the soil. It could be confused with "Weedex" which, as I mentioned recently, is based on simazine, and is also a total weedkiller but remains active in the soil for practically the whole season. The best answer is still to read the label carefully and thoroughly understand the uses of the various chemicals.

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